

# WHEN THE DOMINION WAS YOUNG

By J. E. B. McCready

## THE FOUNDATION OF A GREAT STATE

THE seventh decade of the nineteenth century, in which the Canadian Dominion was called into being, was fruitful of great events in Europe and America. Denmark despoiled of half of her territory, Austria deposed from the headship of Germany and Prussia promoted thereto, France overrun and conquered by Germany, the Napoleonic dynasty ended at Sedan and a republic established on its ruins—such were some of the shocks that buffeted the nations of continental Europe. Within the same period the whole of North America was also shaken by a series of political earthquakes, and its map, like that of Europe, was changed. Following the order of nature these political throes began and were most violent in the southern latitudes of the continent. Maximilian of Austria, backed by Napoleon III and the arms of France, became for a brief space Emperor of Mexico, but later, betrayed by trusted friends, was captured, court-martialled and shot at Queretaro. In the United States arose the most gigantic civil war recorded in history. For a time it seemed that the great Republic must be rent in twain. Millions of armed men struggled upon scores of battlefields. The rivers ran with blood. Lincoln was martyred, but not until he had set his hand to the great emancipation proclamation which struck off forever the manacles from millions of dusky hands. The purchase of Alaska from Russia followed, and the re-united Republic became our northern, as it had before been, our southern neighbor. "Overshadowing us like a winter cloud from the north," was the way Joseph Howe put it, in view of the fact that our powerful rival in North America had but recently disbanded some two millions of armed men. A hundred years before the whole of North and South America had been ruled from Europe. Now all that remained of European sovereignty from Cape Horn to the Arctic Circle was the British North American Provinces, British Honduras, and British Guiana. The great question, Shall we remain British? was in every thoughtful mind. It was felt that politics had become stern, almost tragic, in the new world. Then the representatives of the Provinces met together at Quebec and their first resolve was that "the best interests and future prosperity of British America will be promoted by a federal union under the crown of Great Britain," and Britain on her part, in a memorable despatch, pledged the might of her Empire to defend Canada against the world. Thus, ninety years after the Declaration of Independence, the leading men of the North American Provinces solemnly reaffirmed their allegiance to the British Sovereign, the Red Cross Flag and the monarchial principle. It was, for the northern half of this continent, a momentous epoch.

When the British North America Act went into force and the first federal government was formed on 1st July, 1867, and later when on November 6 the elected representatives of the four Provinces met in Ottawa, there was little more than what the great O'Connell called "a union upon parchment" existing between the larger Provinces of old Canada and the two smaller Provinces on the Atlantic coast. Nova Scotia was almost in open revolt, her provincial government, legislature and people, and eighteen of her nineteen representatives in the federal House of Commons being determinedly committed to a repeal of the union. The people resented the fact that they had been legislated into the union without being consulted, and against their well-known wishes. New Brunswick was less recalcitrant, but still critical and somewhat suspicious of the new relations. Her people had indeed been consulted at the polls in regard to the famous Quebec Scheme in 1865, and had by an overwhelming majority rejected it. In the following year they had given a majority in favor of a revised scheme of union, but the spirit of opposition was still strong among many of her people. Not a few flags floated at half-mast on Dominion Day, 1867, in St. John, and one of these, cut down by some marching volunteers who refused to pass beneath it, gave rise to a sensational prosecution in the police court. Three of the leading Anti-Confederates of 1865, in New Brunswick, were elected to the first House of Commons. These were the late Hon. A. J. Smith, afterward Sir Albert; Hon. T. W. Anglin, afterward Speaker and then editor and proprietor of the *St. John Freeman*; and Hon. John Costigan. The two first named had been leading spirits of the Anti-Confederate Government of 1865-6. They had indeed accepted the union, but like men who accept a fact accomplished, though against their convictions.

In several other important respects the first Parliament differed from any that has succeeded it. It began its sessions representing but four Provinces. It ended as a Parliament for six Provinces, Manitoba having been raised to the provincial status in 1870 and British Columbia brought into the union in 1871. And these new elements were not at first very readily assimilated. Then there was dual representation. From the beginning Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had declared against it. No member of either governments or legislatures was permitted to hold a seat in either the Senate or Commons at Ottawa. Ontario and Quebec had other views. They not only permitted, but at first rather encouraged their leading public men to sit in both the provincial legislatures and the federal Parliament. John Sandfield Macdonald, the first Premier of Ontario, sat in the House of Commons with all his governmental colleagues—John Carling, Stephen Richards, Matthew Crooks Cameron and Edmund Burke Wood. Premier Chauveau, of Quebec, was there in like fashion, supported right and left by the members of his cabinet, Ouimet, Dunkin, Beaubien, Archambault, Irvine and others. Mackenzie Blake and other members of the Ontario Opposition also held dual seats. During the sessions of Parliament there were three Governments in Ottawa, representing in their administrative capacity three-fourths of the people of what then was Canada. And these three Governments were closely allied under the supreme leadership of that astute statesman, Sir John Macdonald. For three or four months of the year Ontario and Quebec were ruled both in federal and provincial affairs from Ottawa. Thus, in close daily touch as well as in alliance politically, this political combination seemed irresistible. It was a unique feature of the first Parliament.

Another distinctive feature was the absence of cohesion among what constituted the Opposition when the first Parliament met. Mr. Mackenzie, the leader of the Opposition, was an Ontario Liberal. Hon. Joseph Howe, the Leader of the Nova Scotian contingent, with most, if not all, of his following, were Liberals.

But Liberalism meant something different in each of the Provinces. The Western Liberals could not, of course, accept Howe's program of repeal, and he and his followers cared nothing for the issues which divided the Reformers of the west from the Liberal-Conservatives who were united under Sir John Macdonald. No Opposition in any Canadian Parliament since that day has been so wanting in cohesion, or so hopelessly divided. The result proved that they could not assimilate. And yet in numbers this heterogeneous Opposition, made up of 36 from Ontario, 20 from Quebec, 18 from Nova Scotia, and 8 from New Brunswick—a total of 82—was quite a formidable body in a House of 181 members, leaving the Government at the outset with a certain majority of no more than 17. This was afterward increased somewhat, but the majority was indeed few enough for a Government which had so formidable a task before it. That task was not only to prevent the threatened disruption, but to fuse together and consolidate the heterogeneous elements and make of them one great Dominion, imbued with a national life and a national spirit.

It is also worthy of note in passing that no succeeding Par-



The Governor-General Lord Willingdon.



The author of these Reminiscences and some of the Leaders he has been in touch with.

liament has contained so many men eminent in the public life of their several Provinces as that which assembled at Ottawa with the first fall of snow in November, 1867. Each of the four Provinces had sent a goodly quota of its ablest men. There were among them no fewer than twelve or thirteen Premiers or ex-Premiers of Provinces. A very much larger number had served, or were serving, in provincial cabinets. Be it observed also that most of these men were either young, or in the prime of vigorous manhood. A few only were comparatively advanced in years. Hon. Joseph Howe, "the old man eloquent," was 63, and his somewhat scanty locks were growing white. Sir Francis Hincks was 60, and his still abundant, bushy hair and beard were snowy. Sir George Cartier, although but 53, was also showing some appearance of age, his iron-grey hair being combed back from his lofty but somewhat receding forehead. Sir John Macdonald, the central figure among them all, was 52, but his curling locks were brown and his every movement was marked by the alertness of youth. Tilley was 49, Dorion 49, Dr. Tupper, as he was then called, was 46; McDougall, 45, Alexander Mackenzie 45; "the granite-faced" leader of the Opposition, Mackenzie Bowell had numbered 44 years, Peter Mitchell 43, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, destined to death before the first session had ended, was 42; Hector L. Langevin, 41, David Mills, 36, Edward Blake, 34, and showing a ruddy face beneath his broad-rimmed slouch hat; Richard J. Cartwright 32, and always immaculately dressed. The venerable Senator Wark, who lived to see the year of his second century, was then of the age of Joseph Howe.

Scores of others might be named, most of whom have passed from life's activities; others known only to the present generation as old, grey-headed men, who when they sat in the first Parliament were only in their thirties and forties. There were giants in those days, giants in their fullest vigor, many of them already famous and awaiting greater fame. A noble earl, when introducing the British North America Act in the House of Lords, had closed his speech with the words: "We are laying today the foundations of a great state which may one day overshadow even ourselves." The leading spirits of the first Parliament were of the stamp which gave promise of that prediction's fulfilment. No one can deny that they possessed the grasp and the forecast of true statesmanship. And the gift of oratory was not wanting. Indeed, that was the olden age of Canadian oratory. On field nights we were privileged to listen to the picturesque and engaging eloquence of Howe, the tremendously energetic and forceful deliverances of Tupper, the melodious voice and classic periods of McGee, the stately diction of Blake, the music of the silver-tongued Huntingdon, the moving oratory of Hilyard Cameron, or the chaste and pleasing discourses of John H. Gray. These and many others in the first Parliament were gifted with rare power to sway the feelings and the minds of men. Many of these eloquent voices are now forever silent, but it may not be without interest to recall them, as they moved and spoke, and to reproduce scenes in which they took part, and impressions formed in and about Parliament in the days when the Dominion was young. Such will be the object of succeeding chapters.

### II.—FIRST HOUSE ORGANIZED.

A considerable number of the New Brunswick senators and members of the first Parliament, together with a goodly quota from Nova Scotia and the members of both Houses, who had come to St. John on their way to Ottawa, and three or four representatives of the leading newspapers of both Provinces, set sail from St. John for Portland on a chilly November morning of 1867. There was then and for nine years later no railway connection be-

tween the eastern and western Provinces of the new Dominion. The Intercolonial Railway was but in embryo, and the Grand Trunk from Portland to Montreal formed the only direct outlet for the St. Lawrence Provinces to the Atlantic.

It seemed more than that it had been, or now is, to be a member of Parliament. In the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Legislatures the members had received a sessional allowance of \$300 each, and the heads of cabinet portfolios \$2,400 a year. In the new Parliament to which we were going these Senators and Commons were to receive \$800 each, and the Cabinet Ministers \$5,000 each. These modest figures have since increased once or twice, then they seemed quite princely. Moreover, these honors and distinctions were new. It is needless to say that the representatives on their way to attend the first session of a national Parliament felt their importance. Like Benjamin Franklin, when first he donned a long-tailed blue coat, they felt "tall and strong and dignified."

I remember that as we sailed down the Bay of Fundy there arose a considerable discussion as to the proper title of a Senator.

"Honorable" seemed quite too small and insignificant a designation. Why, even the members of the petty Legislative Councils were styled "Honorable." "In my opinion," said a Senator from Nova Scotia, "the proper title is 'Senator of Canada.'" And then he threw himself back in his chair with the air of a statesman whose infallible dictum had settled a great and weighty matter of national concern.

Joseph Howe was on board, clad in grey. And, oh how the Nova Scotia "Antis"—anti-confederates—idolized their venerable leader. Sometimes he read, and once as he read he laughed. A stranger at the other end of the table also read and laughed. Each soon attracted the attention of the other. "My I ask," inquired the stranger, "what is your volume that seems to amuse you as much as mine amuses me?" "Certainly," replied Mr. Howe, "it is the memoirs of Sir Jonah Barrington, first volume." "I have the second volume," replied the stranger. Sometimes to the delight of his phalanx of anti-unionists, Mr. Howe talked. He was, indeed, a most engaging conversationalist. And then his admirers stood around his chair, they buzzed about him like bees around their queen bee, sometimes touching him reverently, laughing at his jokes, listening admiringly to his abundant store of anecdotes. Among other things he told us of his trip through Ireland on a jaunting car with Sam Slick for a companion, and protested that there was more fun in Ireland to the square than in any other country under Heaven. At dinner his devoted followers heaped his plate with good things in the presence of his enemies, and when, after the repast, he dozed in his chair, a hush fell on the ship, and it was whispered that the great man slept.

We reached Portland at 3 o'clock in the morning, and Uncle Sam's customs officers were on hand to remind us that we were now in a foreign country. The late Joseph C. Crosskill, of the *Halifax Reporter*; the late Samuel Watts, of the *Woodstock, N.B., Sentinel*, and myself representing the *St. John Telegraph*, hastened to the nearest official and told him we were newspaper men going through to Ottawa. "All right, boys," he said, as he chalked our trunks unopened. Just then along came Senator R. L. Hazen, of St. John. Addressing the customs officer he said, "I am a member of the Senate of Canada. If you want to search my luggage you can do so." The officer replied quietly, "I'll look at it, all the same." So the newspaper men got first to the hotel and were at table partaking of refreshments before the parliamentary contingent arrived. The latter were not all in the most agreeable mood. They murmured against the customs regulations and cast envious glances at the feasting newspaper men. One Senator as he passed our table paused to remark, "All a man needs is to say that he belongs to the press and he can go anywhere and do anything."

The trip up the Grand Trunk was uneventful. It was night when we reached Ottawa. The following morning a party of the Maritimers went out to see the sights. Reaching Parliament Square and surveying thence the three splendid edifices to the north, east and west we paused. One member lifted up his hands and exclaimed in a single word the thought of many—"Extravagance!" These Canadians—the people of Ontario and Quebec—were clearly extravagant in the opinion of the Maritime men. We had heard before of "the miles of cornice and acres of plaster," but now we saw with our own eyes the gigantic piles, the tall towers and gilded vanes, and we knew that the "Canadians" were extravagant. As we entered and gazed upon the columns of marble and polished granite, and all the splendid appointments of the two chambers and the library, this impression was deepened. We did not then know that at the first session, so soon to begin, some thirteen millions of dollars was to be voted. How times have changed!

Now our Parliament without hesitation votes twenty times the original thirteen millions in one session.

The opening was a grand affair to the men from the east, although Lord Monck was the plainest and least ostentatious of all our Governors-General since the union of 1867. Ottawa was a garrison town then, and the officers of the Prince Consort's Own Rifles were present, including Lord Cecil, brother of the late Marquess of Salisbury, and many other scions of the British nobility, their rich uniforms spangled with medals adding lustre to the scene. The two days' ceremonial of opening was a new feature to the Maritime men. And then there were the mace and the wonderful genuflexions of the Usher of the Black Rod, Mr. Kimber. No provincial Legislature east of Quebec ever had a mace. Canada had long ago adopted it. (An earlier mace was captured by the American invaders when Little York (Toronto) was sacked and burned in 1813, and is now preserved as a trophy at the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland.) The mace formed a subject for inquiry and speculation. There it was, a copy we were told of that which lies upon the table of the greatest deliberative assembly in the world. A ponderous club of metal, its body of silver covered with gold, and its top surmounted with an orb and crown. Indeed, it had cost £300 sterling. The mace, we were told, though modelled after the war-club of the middle ages, is the symbol of the power and prerogatives of Parliament. It is related to the sceptre of kings, and even to that of Jove himself, and by which he sometimes swore a tremendous oath inviolate to gods. The functions of the mace, in the language of Haversham Cox, "befit that ancient symbol of the authority of the Commons which is associated with so many eventful passages in English history, and which was never yet insulted with impunity, but when liberty received a wound." And yet some of the Nova Scotian Antis made light of it. "What is it for?" was asked. "The mace?" replied Dr. Forbes, of Queens; "Oh, I suppose it is to give spice to the proceedings!" We did not then know, what we all know now so well, that without the mace there can be no real Parliament, and that it is so sacredly inseparable from Mr. Speaker, that to pass between him and it during a sitting would be parliamentary sacrilege. Fortunately no man has yet ventured to do so, and the fates only know what would happen if one did.

On the first day of the opening, after returning from the Senate, whither it seemed they had been called in vain, came the election of the Speaker. This formality as carried out was then a novelty to the men from the east. The members were in their allotted places, Ministers and Opposition leaders confronting each other and the Clerk, W. B. Lindsay, at the table. Sir John Macdonald arose, the first to speak in the new Parliament he had done so much to create. He addressed the Clerk, who arose and solemnly pointed his finger at Sir John. The latter, in a few complimentary words, nominated Hon. James Cockburn, of Northumberland, as Speaker. When he was seated Hon. George E. Cartier arose and addressed the Clerk, who arose and extended a digit as before, remaining standing and pointing, while Mr. Cartier, speaking in French, briefly seconded the nomination. It seemed there was to be no other nomination, and the Clerk was about to declare Mr. Cockburn elected. Already Sir John and Mr. Cartier had stepped briskly out into the open space before their desks to escort the Speaker elect to his throne, when suddenly a voice from the back bench on the right, speaking in French, called a halt. It was the voice of Joseph Dufresne, of Montcalm, who objected that Mr. Cockburn did not speak the language of the people of his Province, and insisted warmly that the Speaker should be conversant with both the English and French languages. Mr. Cartier replied in French in a conciliatory tone that though Mr. Cockburn did not speak French he understood it very well. Thus the first question debated in the Parliament of the Dominion was the interminable one of the dual language system. There were some angry mutterings from the French members, but Mr. Cockburn was at once declared elected and escorted to his chair. There, standing, he made the prescribed acknowledgment, and the Sergeant-at-Arms, D. W. Macdonnell, placed the mace upon the table. So the first House of Commons was organized and constituted.

In the debate on the Address in the first session of the First Parliament there was something of the usual aftermath of a general election, but the prominent question was that of Confederation and the means by which it had been carried in the Eastern Provinces. George Brown had been defeated in South Ontario. A. T. Galt, disgruntled over the distribution of Confederation honors, had broken with his leader, retired from the post of Finance Minister, and had publicly pledged his utmost effort to "break down the power of Sir John Macdonald in Canada." There were running through the debate echoes of these events, and of earlier debates in the old Canadian Parliament, criticisms of the B. N. A. Act, and questions as to the real status of the Dominion. Why had the draft of the Act as first printed creating the Kingdom of Canada been changed to read the Dominion of Canada? Why was the word Dominion rendered Puissance in the French version? Was Canada a power, greater or lesser, in the accepted meaning of that term? Or a nation, as the words of Lord Monck's Speech from the Throne had called it? Was Confederation a half-way house to Independence? Was such a union as had been formed, a source of strength after the manner of the much hackneyed bundle of sticks, bound together or a source of weakness, as in the case of more joints added to a fishing rod? (The latter was Joe Rymal's illustration.) Such were some of the minor questions and criticisms in and out of Parliament. Above them all rose the question of peril to the new state from Nova Scotia being legislated into the union against the wishes of her people who were now almost in open revolt.

From opposite political standpoints, as from opposite sides of the Chamber, Howe and Tupper engaged the forces of their oratory and logic in this great controversy. It was the last of a long series of conflicts begun many years before between these fore-most of the many able and eloquent sons of Nova Scotia. When young Tupper, then a mere stripling, made his first appearance on the Cumberland hustings against the great Nova Scotian leader, then in his prime, Mr. Howe remarked to a friend, "That boy will give us trouble yet." The words had proved prophetic. (Continued on page six)